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AFTER-STUDY MEDITATIONS

By

Raymond Browning

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After-Study Meditations



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Dedicated

To my sainted father who labored through
long years in his blacksmith shop in order
that his children might have a better
bringing-up than his had been

Preface

FOUR YEARS ago I met Mr. Tokio Kugimiya, a young Japanese student of Trinity College, at the Student Conference at Asheville, N. C., and my association with him during those few days helped to arouse within me a deeper and a nobler sense of the brotherhood of man and to lead me to become a Student Volunteer.

Mr. Kugimiya is now a minister of the Gospel and also the editor of "The Glad Tidings," a monthly Christian paper published in Hiroshima, Japan. My desire to assist him in getting this paper firmly established caused me to publish this little book.

Mr. Z. Hinohara, a friend and fellow student, who will sail for Japan next month to enter upon his work of the ministry, has very kindly allowed me to add one of his poems to this collection of my own.

RAYMOND BROWNING.

Trinity College,
Durham, N. C.
May 28, 1906.

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After-Study Meditations

THE PHANTOM ANVIL

"Cling-clang, cling-clang, cling-clang-clang,"
Merrily the young smith's anvil rang.
He smiled in the forge as he stirred the fire
And mused and dreamed as the flames leaped higher.
The heart's new thrill made the toil seem play,—
His girl wife bore him a son that day;
He gripped the tongs and the hammer swang
To the anvil's "Clang-clang, cling-clang-clang."

"Cling-clang, cling-clang, cling-clang-clang,"
Years tripped by to the hammer's swing.
The blacksmith's hands grew hard as horn,
The wife of his youth was gray and worn;
Their fondest hopes were wrecked one day—
The wilful first-born ran away—
Yet sweet and low would the mother sing
A hymn to the anvil's "Cling-clang-clang."

"Clang-clang, clang-clang, clang-clang-clang,"
"Joy to the world," the church-bell rang.
But the minister scarcely checked his tears
As he thought of his wanton boyhood years;
The village home, and the shop long still,
The grave on a lonely shaded hill,
While a sweeter song than the choir sang,
Was the phantom anvil's "Cling-clang-clang."

POSSIBILITIES

Within the realm of spirit there are things
Invisible and still unknown to men
Which God has treasured up for future years
To pour as precious jewels into minds
Such as are fit to hold and fashion them.
There songs unsung like golden apples hang
For eager hands to pluck. Yes, music, too,
In crystal essence of a soul longs for
A touch in which to mortalize itself;
For brush or tool an undreamt beauty yearns;
And shades of such gigantic thoughts as weave
The stately palace from the dull-faced stone,
Or find new worlds within a brittle glass,
Or read God's law e'en in an apple's fall,—
All fain would lodge in tiny minds of men.
Still more,—sweet angel shapes of deeds of love
Weep for a human heart of texture clear
Through which to shine their blessings on the world.

GRAN'MA RAY

Just 'fore daylight one cool mornin'
Me an' Guy an' Gran'ma Ray
Drove a long ways ter the station,
'Cause she wuz a goin' ter stay
All the winter with Aunt Mamie
'At lives forty miles away.
Lightnin' bugs wuz just a shinin'
In the medders. We went flyin'
Over hills an' skeery bridges
Black Jim drivin' an' me tryin'
Hard ter hold the lantern, while I
Swollered some to keep frum cryin'.
'Cause, you know, Gran'ma ud tell us
More ol' Injun tales an' 'en she
Told us 'bout the war an' slave times,
An' she sung war songs—an' knit me
These here purty striped mittens
So's ol' man Jack Frost can't git me.
Sometimes I'd just want er copper
So's ter git two sticks er candy,—
'En when I'd give one ter Farmer
Simms, he'd say, "Ray, you're a dandy—"
When I hinted jist a little
Gran'ma had er nickel handy.
'Fore we left her at the station
Waitin' there with brother Guy
Gran'ma squeezed me tight an' kissed me
An' she sorter wiped one eye
'En she gimme one more nickel
'Fore I hollered out "Good-bye."

I went tearin' ter the kitchen
Where my mamma wuz one day
An' I saw her just a cryin'
While she put the things away
'En she cried some more an' told me
—I ain't got no Gran'ma Ray.

DUX FEMINA FACTI

Strongest of all the mighty ties that bind
The hearts of men to those of womankind
Is virtue, and the next to be preferred
Is wisdom; sometimes beauty may be third,
But goodness oft with homely looks combined
Is dearer than fair face with vacant mind;
If virtue, wisdom, goodness, beauty live
Together in one body Heaven can give
One greater gift from all its store of good,—
That crowning gift of spotless motherhood.

MARJORIE

Whisper, winds that blow to me
From the hills of Tennessee,
Have you kissed a cheek more fair?
Have you played with her black hair?
Did you touch her tenderly?
—Dark-eyed pensive Marjorie.

Tell me, birds that wing the blue,
Did she sing a song for you
In that low, sweet, throbbing tone,
Angel-pure, yet all her own,
Did you listen eagerly?
—Sweet-voiced gentle Marjorie.

Kind old sun, that paints the flowers
Kissed and wakened by the showers,
Touch her with thy softest light,
Keep her strong and fair and bright.
Dearest flower in Tennessee,
—Sunny-tempered Marjorie.

Soft white moon, whose subtle rays
Turn men's thoughts in strangest ways,
When we see thee, though apart,
Then reflect each other's heart,
Somehow make her think of me,
—Frozen-hearted Marjorie.

Spirits good, that roam the air,
Guard her with unresting care,
Though she shun me as of yore,
Though I see her nevermore,
First of all my loves is she,
Dark-eyed pensive Marjorie.

FOUR ROSES

A wild rose grew by an old stone wall
Near the path that our bare feet tracked together;
And she knew the wild dove's plaintive call,
The squirrel's bark in the beeches tall,
And the woodchuck lore of the vernal weather;
Perhaps she knew that I loved her too.
But beyond my grasp it dangled there,—
That wild rose flushed by the summer air.

A regal rose is the Marechal Niel
And a breath from its creamy petals brings
My love from the past, and I seem to feel
The touch of her hand and my senses reel:
Once more as before her calm voice rings
That firm cold "No" of the long ago:
Yet she stood so queenly and looked so fair
With the Marechal Niel in her dark brown hair.

A red rose pure as the morning's dew,
A rose that throbs with the Spring's warm blood,
An emblem of all that is noble and true,
The fairest of roses that God ever grew
And seems ever fairer whatever my mood:
The red rose brought what my heart long sought;
The wild rose was fickle, the Marechal Niel cold,
The red rose still thrills me tho' love's days are old.

A moss rose grows by a cottage door
Where my children go ofttimes to play;
There's a heart that's lonesome to the core
And a fine face sad that was glad of yore
E'er the rare brown hair was tinged with gray;
She's never wed for her first love's dead.
Lonely old Moss Rose, where you now grow
The Marechal Niel stood that I loved long ago!

THE POET LAUREATE

A tigress wild named Laurie
Departed from the Zoo;
She wandered through the country;
A poet walked there too.

When Laurie was recaptured
Shoe-strings hung on her claws
And ragged strips of breeches
Were trailing from her jaws.

The people missed their poet
But 'twas a lucky fate
For he became thereafter
The poet laureate.

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A VALENTINE

Think not, dear heart, tho' mountains be
Piled high between myself and thee
That love cannot above them soar
And find thee, fair as e'er before.

Tho' time and place with fetters strong
Have held me from thee,—aye so long
Not all the schemes beneath the skies
Can hide thee from my spirit eyes.

Ah! like some vision sweet I see
Thy form impalpable to me,
Yet not one atom holds apart
Thy breast and my impatient heart.

Sweetheart, tho' racked by passions strong,
The love I've borne for thee so long
Burns in me like the seraph's coal
To purge me for thy lily soul.

My lips, tho' dumb at other times,
Today speak forth in simple rhymes
The message they have feared to tell,
"My Valentine, I love you well."

THE MIDNIGHT PRAYER

'Twas midnight. The November moon,
Full, queenly, in the zenith sat
'Neath aureoles of autumn hues
While she surveyed the sleeping world.
No breeze disturbed the silver mists,
That hid the blackness of the dales.
A holy quiet bound the earth.
The dew-drops, children of the mist,
Embraced upon the glist'ning roof,
Tumbled o'er the eaves and passed
A light that through a window shone.

The circling of the suns and stars
Had brought another Sabbath day,
Laden with healing balm of rest
For weary limbs and burdened souls.
'Twas that sweet hour when throbbing waves
Of deity break on men's lives
And smoothe the tracks of troubling thoughts.
A silhouette the curtain caught,
A head bowed long on knotted hands.
It moved, then darkness filled the space.

OUR COLORED JANITOR

Our school seems always brighter
When Commodore's around
Somehow his hearty laughter
Is contagious in its sound,
The homesick boys grow cheerful
And the surly fellows smile
When a jolly roar from Commodore
Is heard for half a mile.

He loves big words and his Bible;
He makes use of both all the while
"I'm a geographical sketcher,"
And his white teeth gleam in a smile
"Elegant, thank you, this morning!"
"Are you extinguished today?"
That ebony hide is white inside,
"Bless the Lord" is the theme of his lay.

TO MY OLD TEACHER

Sapiens Johnny
Legit book semper
Ridet things funny
Looses nunquam his temper.

Ignarus schoolboy
Legit his Xenophon
Velut canis hungry
Ambedit a bone.

"Er—Er—" dicit puer
Dicit Johnny, "Ho! Ho!"
"Two ers makes an error."
Heu, infestum voe!

A LAST TOKEN

Dreaming of love,—love that may never be,
Waiting and hoping and yearning for thee,
Dark seems the future and yet I would see
Even the worst that is waiting for me.

Years have passed by since I first saw thy face
Lovely and pure in its sweet girlish grace.
High over all in my heart is its place—
Beautiful picture no time can erase.

Could you have loved me the days that were long
Gently had passed like a sweet vesper song,
Always my love for thee steadfast and strong
Softly had spoken when life had gone wrong.

Loving thee ever has caused me but pain,
Oft I'd forget thee but could not refrain,
One thought of thee stirred the fire in each vein,
One hope of thee made me helpless again.

Scorn me, I blame not, the fault is not thine,
Neither of loving thee is the fault mine;
Fair eyes and tender too—all I resign
Merely to send thee one last Valentine.

PROVINCIALISM

When I would see fair Lena Lee
Shake off her sweet solemnity,
A glad light rise in her dark eyes,
Then cast a dazzling smile at me,
A single word—perhaps you've heard—
I'd speak, then sadness changed to glee
—It's "Greensboro."

Whenever she would distant be
And talk in freezing tones to me
That little word, tho' faintly heard
Would warm at once the Arctic Sea.
The inmost part of her young heart
Has still its "Open Sesame,"
—It's "Greensboro."

Perhaps some day you'd like to say
Some tender things that come your way;
Good friend, beware, lest then and there,
She tell you gently, firmly "Nay."
No hope she'll give unless you'll live
With her forever and a day
In "Greensboro."

THOUGHTS FOR A DISCOURAGED RHYMESTER

Is you gwine ter quit yo singing
Jes kase folks doan want ter hear?
Is you gwine to stop de ringin
Ob de heart-bells sweet an clear?

Ain't de rock dat went er sailin
At de cat-bird in yo tree
Sent him flyin ter my palin
Fence, ter sing er chune fer me?

An deys lots of lonesome places
In de woods, and fiels, and town,
An deys lots ob pekid faces
Glad to hear dem notes drap down.

Sho! dem little birds er cheepin
To dere mammy fer er worm,
Gwine ter set yo heart er leapin,
Fo de sumner's served its term.

Keep er tunin up and tryin
Eben if de chords gits wrong;
Bimeby de folks is sighin
Fer de music ob yo song,

An ef dey don't keep singing
Lak a bird sing—kase he must;
He's erbleeged to keep er ringin
Out his glory chune, or bust.

A DREAM

Sweet were the dreams I dreamed of thee
 Last night, my Love.
We floated on a golden sea
 So bright, my Love.
Soft was the air; the sky was blue;
The crystal boat held only two;—
 How sweet! my Love.

Black grew the sea and black the sky
 Ere long, my Love.
A cursing blast came sweeping by
 So strong, my Love.
Fear bit my heart,—thy face grew white,
I clasped thee in my arms so tight
 And smiled, my Love.

Thy form slipped from me in the night
 Too soon, my Love.
A silence came, and then a light,—
 The moon, my Love.
Her silver beams lay on my bed
And on my cheeks were tears I'd shed
 For thee, my Love.

KRAKALOO

On the College Inn piazza, O that's where I long to be!
There a jolly crowd is loafing and I know they wish for me,
But this Homer ravel's slowly while their whistling seems to
say:
"When your torture's over, Johnny, then at Krakaloo we'll
play."

Then at Krak-a-loo we'll play,
From morn till close of day,—

Can't you see our pennies twinkling as the hours flit away?
O it's Krak-a-loo we'll play,
Hang the lessons anyway,

And the Faculty to thunder when the coppers clink so gay!
It takes no wit nor wisdom to play this little game
But the simplest guy in college wins your shekels just the same.
And the coons that swarm our prisons had better learn perhaps
Krak-a-loo's a bit more classic than a vulgar game of craps.

Yes! a vulgar game of craps—

Not the thing for college chaps—

Leads to court and jail and chaingang and similar mishaps.
O it's Krak-a-loo we'll play,
Hang the lessons anyway,

And the Faculty to thunder when the nickels clink so gay!
I am sick of chapel lectures and this moral view of things,
The sweet "wild joys of living" and the crown that labor brings.
Let the devil take ambition, the books, and college too
While I flip away existence in a game of Krak-a-loo!

Oh! one game of Krak-a-loo!

Toss the brownies to the blue,

Strive to solve the burning question:—"Which one wins it, me
or you?"

Oh, it's Krak-a-loo we'll play,

Hang the lessons anyway,

And the Faculty to thunder when the quarters clink so gay!

FIRST ACQUAINTANCE

At last I've met fair Margaret
And found her all I dreamed she'd be
Her face so rare, her auburn hair,
Her laugh that ripples tenderly,
The mild surprise in her brown eyes
Combine a potent charm for me.

The songs I'd heard perhaps had stirred
My fancy strangely for she seemed
So fair that night, one moment's sight
Called up a vision I had dreamed.
My pure ideal, incarnate, real,
Was sitting where the box lights gleamed.

A year was spent in wonderment—
If my imaginings were true,
Would day-dreams sweet if we should meet
Prove bitter? Would my friendship too
Unpleasant be to her if she
Could only know me as I knew.

Last night the breeze stirred in the trees
Where we were strolling to and fro,
The music's strains brought back again
Enchantments of a year ago.
Quite formal were my words to her,
But what I thought she doesn't know.

THE ETERNAL FEMININE

Who is the wonderful woman with whom
Often I meet in the mystical gloom
Down where the heart-soothing jessamines bloom
 In gardens of dreams?
Under the trees of perennial green
Murmur cool fountains. The undazzling sheen
Falls softly down and weaves rainbows between
 The hills and the streams.

There where the asphodel blossoms are sweet
Dew-jewelled lawns kiss the light-tripping feet
Bearing this fairy-like creature to greet
 My call from the grove;
Sweeter than nectar her kisses so warm;
Gently I clasp in my arms her pure form;
Blue as a lake never touched by a storm,—
 The eyes of my love.

Would this sweet phantom that evermore seems
Happy to walk by my side in my dreams
Watching the stars in the slumbering streams,—
 Of weird fancy-land,
Could in the future, sometime and somewhere,
Sweetly embodied—a woman so fair—
Look in my eyes with that love-smile so rare
 When I press her hand.

GOODBYE BELL BUCKLE

Now the bee hums in the clover,
Hums, "Your school days here are over.
Pretty Seniors this is May,
Plume your wings and fly away."

Woods and fields are decked in green.
Flowers sprinkled in between,
Nature paints the landscape o'er,
Home alone can charm us more.

Sawney Webb is growing old
Yet he'll live through years untold,
Live in lives of boys he loves,
"A man is known by what he does."

Time slips by, we cannot stay,
Soon our heads will all be gray.
Memory then will yield her joys
Still we'll be old Webb-School boys.

Tonight we part, perhaps forever,
We may not meet till we cross the river,
Then in heaven we'll call out loud,
"Show us the rest of the Webb-School crowd."

MY AMBITION

I'll leave one tender little song,

A flower for my grave,
That tired earth's melancholy throng
May smile and hum its music long
When tears their faces lave.

The circling planets mete my time
And hurry me away,
Perhaps unto a cloudless clime
To live in youth's eternal prime,
And yet I yearn to stay.

Ah! earth is sweet and life is good
However mixed with pain,
And heaven's luring pleasures would
Not tempt me hence, if but I could
Forever here remain.

The golden glow of autumn leaves
Was once the green of May;
In transient glory nature weaves,
From bursting buds to garnered sheaves
A drama of decay.

The gentle throbbing crystal stream
Of life is at flood tide.
In laughter, sorrow, work, and dream
Its opalescent treasures gleam
But soon it shall subside.

Before the vesper bell shall ring
The sunset of my day,
One fadeless hopeful song I'll sing,
Born of a soul with broken wing,
Then gladly I'll away.

TWO VIEWS

A cabin on a distant hill,
The moonlight's clear yet all is drear;
The winter wind is whistling shrill
 Across the gleaming snow,
 And haunting thoughts of woe
 Within me start
 And make my heart
Like to the scene,—a gloomy chill.

Still stands the cabin on the hill,
The moonlight clear betokens cheer;
The wind is whistling just as shrill
 Across the frozen snow,
 And every joy I know
 Wakes at the sight,
 A soft red light
That flickers o'er the window sill.

A POET GREAT I LONG TO BE

Within my room I sit me down,
I grasp my pen, I scratch my crown,
And greet all comers with a frown;
For in the depths of my vast soul
Sweet tides of unborn music roll.

With reverent sigh I woo the muse:
"Calliope, my mind suffuse
And keep it as the widow's cruse
With liquid melodies so rare
Distilled from sunshine, flow'rs, and air."

Then far within my heart's deep dells
There tinkle faintly fairy bells
The elfin chorus louder swells,—
Voices of creatures mystical
In song so strangely beautiful.

The bare walls of my room dissolve,
And into palace halls evolve;
Around, around weird lights revolve,
And in a maze of phantasy
I flit in wondrous ecstacy.

Through magic realms my spirit flies,
O'er jewelled fields, 'neath studded skies
Along the sparkling streams it lies,—
Swift and more swift it tries to flee
The borders of infinity.

A painful blank, a vacant stare;
I chew my pen; I pull my hair;
The page is still untouched and fair;—
My nap is o'er and I'm again
The same old fool I've always been.

TO JOSEPH FRANCIS BIVINS

Our gentle friend, we miss thy kindly smile
And fain would have thee with us once again
To cheer our lives and drive away earth's pain
That gnaws our hearts and makes us sad the while
We should be glad. Come back, and help beguile
Life's discords harsh into a sweet refrain,
That we may sing while trudging down the lane
Where glory waits beyond the old dark stile:
For thou wast like some stalwart cliff that stands
Far out upon a desert 'neath a sun
That beats upon it with a torrid beam;
The fainting travelers in the blistering sands
Look up, cry out, toward it run
To find a shadow and a cooling stream.

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DANGER

Though we suffer no intrusion,
We're not yearning for seclusion
And 'tis not a wise conclusion
That our friends have gone away
For we see them every day.

'Tis, in truth, a distant meeting
For we only see them fleeting
As they wave a kindly greeting
From the other side the street
Which of course is quite discreet.

For the cause is plainly seen
'Tis the sign of quarrantine
Swinging in the sunlight sheen
Just above our closed front door,
A yellow flag and nothing more.

SHIKI NO UTA

Yomo no nagame wa aya naseru
Haru no nishiki ni kaza rarenu,
Hira, hira, hira to,
Hana yori hana e
Mai yuku cho-o zo
Geni tanoshi kere.

Suna-yaku natsu no kure-tsu-kata
Hitori kokage ni tachi yoreba,
Sawa, sawa, sawa to,
Suzu shiki yu kaze
Sasa yaku koe zo
Geni itoshi kere.

Yu sora hare te yama no ha ni
Teru izayoi no tsuki kageni.
Rin, rin, rin to,
Aki no mi shirabe
Kanazuru mushi zo
Geni shizuka nare.

Mi watasu kagiri shiro tae no
Koromo ni yoso-o niwa no omo,
Kira, kira, kira to,
Teru asa hikage.
Fuyu no ashita zo
Geni medeta kere.

SONG OF THE SEASONS

Flowers now adorn the earth, gorgeous plants and blooms;
Spring that gives to them new birth—spring hath burst their
tombs,

Waving, waving, waving slow,
Butterflies, by magic art,
Float 'twixt flowers to and fro;
Joy and gladness fill my heart.

'Neath a shady tree I stand, leaning there alone;
Summer sunbeams burn the sand late this afternoon.

Rustle, rustle, rustle there.
Wind-blown leaves that shake and start
As the breezes stir the air—
Love and longing fill my heart.

Evening clouds have gone from sight, while above a hill
Rests the full moon, clear and bright; earth and air are still.

Chirping, chirping, chirping, so!
Katydids and crickets start
Merry autumn tunes so low;
Peace and quiet fill my heart.

Covered is the garden now with celestial dress,
Like Yamato maiden's brow, pure as her caress;

Sparkle, sparkle, sparkle snow,
Winter's sun must lend his art
To thy gems, they glitter so—
Grace divine now fills my heart.

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